

GOSSIP OF THE DRAMA FROM MANY POINTS OF VIEW

The Rise of Irving.

Years of Hard Work After the Recognition of Great Talent—"The Uncle" and "The Bells."

IN the winter of 1850-51 a pleasing ceremony was performed by the pupils of Dr. Pinches' school, in Georgetown, Maryland Street, a locality familiar to readers of "Pickwick." In accordance with time-honored custom, the pupils, dressed in the short jackets and overhanging linen collars usually worn by the rising generation at that time, celebrated the arrival of the Christmas holidays by giving recitations before an audience consisting mainly of relatives and friends. In the preliminary remarks one of these boys displayed particular intelligence and ardor, and Mr. Creswick, the tragedian, who was a friend of the schoolmaster, and happened to look in, patted the youth on the head, gave him some valuable advice, and taught him how to grasp a dagger in the most approved tragic fashion.

The pupil thus honored dearly wished to recite a rather sensational poem called "The Uncle," and was requested by the master—a most amiable man—to choose something "a little less theatrical." Whatever he did he was sure to do well, and Mr. Creswick had the satisfaction of knowing that the loudest of the many loud plaudits elicited from the audience on the evening of the breaking up were bestowed upon his protegee.

The boy thus brought to notice was Henry Irving, born at Keinton, a town within easy distance of the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey, in 1838. The applause he won at the school in Georgetown had scarcely ceased to ring in his ears when he was placed in the office of an East India merchant, with the prospect, if he gave satisfaction, of obtaining a lucrative post in Calcutta.

Before long, however, he resolved to seek fame and fortune on the stage, and with this in view took lessons from an actor named Hoskins, in Myddleton Square. This Mr. Hoskins was so pleased with his pupil that he introduced him to Mr. Phelps, then the manager of Sadler's Wells Theater. The tragedian, after hearing the aspirant recite "Othello's Address to the Senate," kindly smiled approval, but advised him not to join such an ill-reputed profession as the player's.

"Well sir," said Irving, who was not eighteen, "it seems strange that such advice should come from you, seeing that you enjoy so great a reputation as an actor. I think I shall take my chance and go upon the stage." "In that case, sir, you may come next season to Sadler's Wells, and I'll give you £2 a week, to begin with," Irving, completely taken aback, stammered a few words of grateful appreciation, but did not accept the offer. He thought it better to begin his career in the provinces—the best of all schools for the actor.

Unalloyed Stage Fright.

In 1856, bidding a final adieu to the office of the East India merchant, he made his first appearance on the stage. It was at the Lyceum Theater, Sunderland, and the part allotted to him was Orleans, in "Richelieu." He had never felt a want of confidence in reciting before friends, but it was different when he found myriads of cold, critical eyes fixed upon him. His self-possession gave way, but owing to the hare-like timidity of the character of Orleans, the performance was not much affected.

His next essay was not so fortunate. The play was "A Winter's Tale," Irving taking the Cheironas. His nervousness was so intense that he forgot the important speech in the first act, and, importing in his excitement some words from another play, "Come on to the market place, and I will tell you further," fled the stage. This unlooked-for invitation naturally caused the greatest confusion; the local critics sharply rebuked the young actor for his irrelevant alteration of the poet's text, and very probably he would have been dismissed on the spot if the manager had not good-humoredly made allowances for inexperience.

Manifest Versatility.

From 1857 to 1859 Irving was at the Theater Royal, Edinburgh, supporting such artists as Miss Cushman, Cobden, Miss Faucit, Charles Mathews, Vandenberg, and Webster. It was in the course of this useful and aspiring period of practice that his versatility was first shown. Nothing came amiss to him—tragedy, comedy, melodrama, farce, burlesque, or opera.

His reputation spread rapidly, and in 1859, at the instance of Mr. Toole, an almost lifelong friend, he was engaged to appear at the Princess Theater, London. Here he had no chance of distinguishing himself, but two readings which he gave at Crosby Hall were sufficient to prove that an actor of no ordinary pretensions awaited public recognition. Determined to win a prominent place in his profession, Irving returned to the country, and for five years endured with singular tenacity of purpose the labors and vicissitudes inseparable from the life of a provincial actor.

In 1865, having played some time in Manchester, where he excited much enthusiasm by a performance of Hamlet, Sir Henry Irving went to Liverpool, and in that town began to obtain a hold upon the public which he never afterward lost. In 1866 Mr. Boucicault engaged him to support Miss Kate Terry in "Hunted Down," in which he created so great an impression that London was at once open to him. In October, 1866, he appeared at the St. James Theater as Doricourt in "The Belle's Stratagem," and at once made his mark.

"Ah, Mr. Oxfenford," said Mrs. Matthews, meeting the illustrious critic after the performance, "what did you think of Doricourt?"

"An admirable performance," was the reply.

"There's a great future in store for Irving," continued the lady.

"I'm inclined to think so myself," said the critic. And on more than one occasion the lively lady predicted that sooner or later Irving would be "at the top of the tree."

Dickens as a Prophet.

Irving next played Rawdon Scudamore in "Hunted Down," and more than confirmed the impression made by his Doricourt. Time went on, and he appeared as Joseph Peverell, Count Falcon, Robert Redburn, Bob Gossett, Compton Merr, and Bill Sikes. In none of these impersonations was there anything in

common with the conventional villain of the stage, and their originality was equalled only by their histrionic force. Competent judges of actors selected Mrs. Matthews' estimate of the actor, Charles Dickens, after seeing "The Lancashire Lass," told his son that the greatest things might be expected of the actor who played that rather commonplace rascal, Redburn.

For a time, Sir Henry Irving's name was identified with characters of the stamp, and but for the thoroughness with which he represented Harry Dorn-ton—in which Mrs. Sartoris (Adelaide Kemble), said he reminded her vividly of the famous members of her own family—Charles, George, and Henry Marlow, Captain Absolute, and Chevenix (Uncle Dick's darling) it might have been supposed that the range of his powers was not wide. In 1870, at the Vaudeville, he advanced his reputation as a comedian to its highest point by his Digby Grant in "The Two Roses," a portrait which may be regarded as perfect in both principle and detail.

"The Bells! The Bells!"

It was in the run of "The Two Roses" that Henry Irving obtained possession of "The Bells," and only a cursory glance at the play was sufficient to make him anxious to play Matthias. But how could this hope be realized? The poetic drama was not in fashion, and no manager, it was to be feared, would incur the risk of producing a piece of that class. By way of testing the feeling of the public on this point, Sir Henry Irving, on the occasion of his benefit at the Vaudeville, recited the "Dream of Eugene Aram," and the result was to show that the essay he contemplated might be made with some probability of success.

He gave up his engagement at the popular Vaudeville in the autumn of 1871 for one at the then unpopular Lyceum in the hope of inducing the manager, Mr. Bateman, to bring out "The Bells." For some time a cloud had seemed to rest upon the house, "Fanchette," the manager's trump card, failed; "Pickwick," though very cast, shared the same fate. Mr. Bateman then agreed to give "The Bells" a trial.

The piece was produced on Saturday, the 25th of November, and had it not succeeded the Lyceum would soon have been closed. Expectation had run very high, for the Polish Jew had been brought out at one of the minor theaters with anything but the desired result, and it was not supposed that even so versatile an actor as Sir Henry Irving could meet the requirements of the last act.

Those who make it a point of being present at important first nights, but saw no adequate inducement on this occasion to go to the theater, were soon angry with themselves for their want of faith. So powerful an impression had since the days of Macready and Charles Keen. The mental torture of the science-stricken burgomaster, relieved by touches of fine feeling or by cynical exultation at the cleverness with which he had destroyed all traces of his crime and crime, and the most powerful and impressive interpretation of that role in the memory of present-day patrons of the stage. The new play, "Dante," is to be given but once, on Friday evening. This play is rather more spectacular and poetic than dramatic, but it is a fine offering, nevertheless, and in artistic care and generosity surpasses any spectacle displayed in Washington for years.

The Risen Sun.

The actor had at last found a character more worthy of his talents than any he had previously obtained in London, nor did he fail to make the most of his advantage. Such a roar of applause, such a triumph, followed the fall of the curtain had not been heard in a theater for many years, and far into the morning the Matthias of Sir Henry Irving was the talk of almost every club in London. The critics at once acknowledged the rising, or rather the risen, sun.

The tide turned quickly; the previously deserted Lyceum was crowded to repletion, and for 150 nights in succession "The Bells" held the place of honor in the bills. It is still one of the most prominent plays in the repertoire of Sir Henry Irving, and which followed the well known, and it would take too long to enumerate his numerous successes.

The bright-eyed little boy at Dr. Pinches' school in the short jacket and over-lapping linen collar of half a century ago, is now by reason of genius and ambition and unwearied industry, the most prominent representative in England of what Voltaire called "the finest, the rarest, and the most difficult of all arts." A. D. A.

Past and Future.

Christmas week did not prove after all a disaster either to Washington theaters or to visiting companies. For two days, perhaps, the general public absorption in holiday festivities and the rush of belated preparations detracted from the attendance which the week's bills might otherwise have enjoyed. But the two performances of Christmas Day in each of the six more important theaters made up this loss.

"Merely Mary Ann" was the most potent attraction of the week, as was to have been expected. Mr. Zangwill is too fine an artist, his touch is too sure, for a representative work from his pen to fall before any musical comedy ever written. But Miss Robson, Mr. Arden, Miss Dwyer, and Mr. Hackett—the two last named contributing most excellent impersonations in the form of the lodge-keeper and the Rev. Mr. Smedley—deserve almost as much credit as the playwright. Surely "Merely Mary Ann" in the hands of almost any other actors must have lapsed into a cheap comedy more than once. Thursday evening Manager Tyler introduced several new members into the cast, and presented for the first time the fourth act as rewritten by Mr. Zangwill. Both manager and author thought the conversation of the first five minutes of the act dull and irrelevant to the rest of the play. Accordingly Mr. Zangwill rewrote that part of the dialogue and improved it greatly.

The "Chinese Honeymoon" enjoyed a new lease on life. The second No. 1 company—it is noteworthy that the theatrical concert permits any number of "Original" organizations to appear in the same city in the same week—proved to be stronger than the first. Christmas Day found a characteristic musical comedy house in the Columbia, and actors, house officials, and audience alike made merry.

The Chesebroughs played large audiences. "Paul Revere" rather leaned on the reputation of the Lafayette than contributed to it. Both melodramas found holiday appreciation from large audiences. It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of Mr. Irving's engagement. For many years—since the death of Edwin Booth—he has been the fore-



DANTE AND CARDINAL COLONNA IN SARDOU'S NEW PLAY OF "DANTE."

most living actor. Certain critics who find peculiar delight in the acting of all foreigners have now and then preferred Coquelin or Possart, or some other, before Mr. Irving, but the judgment of the best critical authorities is otherwise all in his favor. His repertoire for Washington is most attractive. Monday and Thursday evenings he will appear in "Waterloo" and "The Bells," and present the two character impersonations with which his name is most intimately connected. Tuesday and Saturday evening he will play "Louis XI." Wednesday and Saturday matinee he will act Shylock, and present the most powerful and impressive interpretation of that role in the memory of present-day patrons of the stage. The new play, "Dante," is to be given but once, on Friday evening. This play is rather more spectacular and poetic than dramatic, but it is a fine offering, nevertheless, and in artistic care and generosity surpasses any spectacle displayed in Washington for years.

Richard Carle, in what other critics have called "Arizona" set to music.



HENRY IRVING AS DANTE.

will hold forth at the Columbia. "The Princess Chic" will sing and dance at the Lafayette. Marie Dressler and a group of other vaudeville stars—there are many stars in vaudeville these days—will usher in the New Year at Chase's. Thomas E. Shea, an actor who would shine in any theater in Washington, will appear at the Academy. The Empire will offer a strong melodrama, "Saved from the Sea."

The Capital enters on the New Year with a happy and confident step.

At the Theaters.

Mr. Irving's Engagement.

What promises to be the most interesting and important event of the theatrical season will be the reappearance of Sir Henry Irving at the National Theater next week. His repertoire will include at least one novelty, "Dante," the new play which Sardou wrote especially for him. The visit of Sir Henry Irving is in itself an event, and

the new Sardou drama means much more than the acting of all foreigners have now and then preferred Coquelin or Possart, or some other, before Mr. Irving, but the judgment of the best critical authorities is otherwise all in his favor. His repertoire for Washington is most attractive. Monday and Thursday evenings he will appear in "Waterloo" and "The Bells," and present the two character impersonations with which his name is most intimately connected. Tuesday and Saturday evening he will play "Louis XI." Wednesday and Saturday matinee he will act Shylock, and present the most powerful and impressive interpretation of that role in the memory of present-day patrons of the stage. The new play, "Dante," is to be given but once, on Friday evening. This play is rather more spectacular and poetic than dramatic, but it is a fine offering, nevertheless, and in artistic care and generosity surpasses any spectacle displayed in Washington for years.

"Dante" was first presented last April at the Drury Lane Theater in London, and was one of the great successes of the year. As the title indicates, it is an ideal treatment of the life of the Italian poet. The drama symbolizes him as he shows himself in the "divine comedy." It is a moral, and not a physical, Dante Sardou has elected to present. It is not surprising to find that a strong political bias is assigned the hero in whom are personified a keen partisan of liberty and a hater of oppression and ecclesiastical domination.

The action opens in Pisa by the Tower of Famine, in which we see the judicial slaughter by hunger of Ugolino, whose story is one of the most tragic in the "Divine Comedy." This scene serves to show Dante's indignation and horror at the atrocities heaped upon Ugolino, his sons, and his nephews by Ruggieri, the Archbishop of Pisa. After this tragic episode, which is given with a wealth of local color, we pass into gayer scenes, amid the springtime fets of Florence. Ten years have elapsed, and Dante, who has been in exile, returns in disguise. We are introduced to his personal friends—Giotto, whose picture of him still hangs in the Palazzo at Naples; Casella, Forase, and others—and hear a song of Dante's sung by Casella. Here, too, is introduced Pia de Tolomei, with whom Dante has exquisitely tender love scenes, wherein she talks of the tragedy of her separation from Giotto, their joint offspring.

After the death of the mother in the following act, in the fashion described by Dante, in a short scene the murder by Malatesta of Francesca and his brother Paolo, who have hitherto fitted through the play, is delineated. Giotto, the daughter of Pia de Tolomei and Dante, is the victim of relentless persecution, and is forcibly confined in a convent, from which she is delivered by her father and her lover, Bernardino, brother of Francesca da Rimini. This scene leads to the climax, since it is through Giotto's flight from the convent and her disregard of her vows that Dante at the Palace of Avignon is compelled to face, defy, and threaten Cardinal Colonna, who dies under the poet's malediction. Before this dramatic scene, which brings the whole to a splendid close, Dante has, with the aid of Virgil, led us from the Campo Santo, in Florence, through the door of hell, shown us the bark of Charon with its pale tenants, conducted us "O'er many of frozen, many of fiery, Alp," and introduced us to many of the principal characters in the Inferno.

"Dante" will be played by Sir Henry Irving only on Friday evening. His repertoire for the balance of the week includes revivals of "Waterloo" and "The Bells" on Monday and Thursday evenings; "Louis XI" on Tuesday and Saturday evenings, and "The Merchant of Venice" on Wednesday evening and Saturday matinee. Sir Henry Irving will be accompanied, as usual, by all the members of his London company.

Columbia—"The Tenderfoot."

Richard Carle, in "The Tenderfoot," a late musical production, will be seen this week at the Columbia Theater, where it comes from a run of 192 performances in Chicago. The engagement is for one week, with matinees on New Year and Saturday.

Novelty is the principal characteristic of "The Tenderfoot." The freshness of everything in connection with the play—not incidents, characters, and their surroundings—appeals strongly to an audience, and this is said to be one of the chief features of the new play.

"The Tenderfoot" has been referred to as "Arizona" set to music. That phrase implies the atmosphere of Augustus Thomas' play, which is there in abundance. There are Mexicans, and cowboys, Indians, and Chinamen, sent on from over the border, and blue-shirted alkali-dusty rangers of Texas. In direct contrast with these living types of the Southwest, is Zachary Pettibone, a retiring, ruleless, and timid tutor from Vermont, whom Mr. Carle built very adroitly to suit himself. Speedily spotted as a "tenderfoot" the luckless Yankee is made to drink more than is good for him, is roped at the dinner, and made to dance under the stress

of revolver shots. His mishaps furnish most of the comedy situations. Equipped with a libretto that needs no overhauling, and with tuneful score by H. L. Heartz, "The Tenderfoot" makes a bold bid for the favor of the local public.

The production and cast for this engagement are the original in every detail, and are said to be one of the strongest ever organized in the West. It consists of seventy-five players, and comprises, in addition to Mr. Carle, Edmund Stanley, Henry Norman, Charles Wayne, William Bock, Daniel Moyle, H. L. Austin, Milton Baldwin, Bertha Davis, Margaret Sayre, Agnes Paul, Ethel Johnson, Abna Conley, Hortense Mazurette, Louise Gardner, Lucille Adams, and their choral galaxy, which includes the famous "Dolly Girls."

Chase's—New Year Vaudeville.

New Year week, commencing at the matinee tomorrow, will find Chase's Theater the center of action of some of the most prominent features in polite vaudeville, the program containing Marie Dressler, the Hoosier Zouaves, Foy and Clark, Musical Dale, Joe Flynn, Irene La Tour, Herbert Brooks, and the

said to be pulse-stirring. Foy and Clark are recent accessions to the headliners, owing to the success they have made in their new and original comedy "The Old Curiosity Shop." Musical Dale is expected to receive an ovation, as, although here years ago, he made an impression that has never been removed from the minds of the Chase audiences. His single instrumental act is said yet to be unsurpassed in vaudeville. Joe Flynn, "the man with the book," will offer his nonsensical monologue, Irene La Tour and her sagacious little pet dog Zazz combine to form, it is said, a highly entertaining feature. Herbert Brooks, the wizard, will present his "puzzling trunk mystery," and the Vitagraph rural motion pictures are expected to prove one of the best series of the season. Chase's never increases its prices upon such holiday occasions as the New Year Day matinee, when every seat is but 25 cents, and all are reserved.

Lafayette—"The Princess Chic."

"The Princess Chic," by Klerke La Shelle and Julian Edwards, will begin a week's engagement at the Lafayette Theater tomorrow night. The company



RICHARD CARLE AS PROF. ZACHARY PETTIBONE IN "THE TENDERFOOT."

Vitagraph rural motion pictures, entitled "Our Barnyard Friends," Marie Dressler has fortified herself with wholly new material, ranging from the serious to the satirical, and entertained by the popular ditties for which she is noted. The Hoosier Zouaves are the only number of their kind in vaudeville, and their act is said to be highly interesting, exhibiting the remarkable tactics of the zouaves, heightened by their showy uniforms and accentuated by the remarkable color and precision of their intricate evolutions. The act concludes with a wall-scaling feat

presenting the opera, has as its prima donna this season Vera Michelena, who is credited with being a charming young vocalist. She is the daughter of Fernando Michelena, a well-known tenor, who was associated with the late Emma Abbott. Miss Michelena is said to be a remarkably handsome woman, and it would seem that she has made an emphatic hit in the leading role of the La Shelle-Edwards opera. Thomas Leary, the well-known comedian, who created the principal comedy role, and who was last year absent from the cast, has been re-engaged, and will, along

with Harry Lane, Fred Bailey, Elfrède Busing, Beatrice Bronte, Dorothy Williams, Julia Coles, Forest Huff, George Thomas, John R. Bartlett, and the other members of the cast, appear in the presentation of the piece in this city. The organization has a chorus of fifty voices. It is said the scenery and costumes for this season's tour have been entirely renewed, and the production has gained the reputation of being more brilliant and attractive than ever.

Academy—Thomas E. Shea.

Thomas E. Shea and his capable company will begin an engagement at the Academy commencing tomorrow night. Mr. Shea is a favorite here, and a warm welcome is always in store for him. The secret of his success is that he is a thorough student, and in his selection of plays always hits the public fancy. On Monday and Thursday evenings he will present "The Bells," or "The Murder of the Polish Jew." It is the drama that first brought Sir Henry Irving into prominence, and is a character portrayal that critics declare Mr. Shea interprets with wonderful skill. Tuesday and Saturday evenings he will offer "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." Because of the great strain which this character calls forth, he has time and again dropped it from his list of plays, but only to be placed back again at the request of theatergoers. On Wednesday evening an adaptation of Tom Taylor's play, "The Fool's Revenge," will be presented. Friday, with a special New Year matinee, the naval drama "The Man-o'-Wars-Man" will be given.

Everybody who is fond of the sea and its excitements and can be thrilled by stories of naval fights should like "The Man-o'-Wars-Man." It is said to teem with stirring adventures and escapes by land and sea.

For the matinees Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, the romantic melodrama, "The Pledge of Honor," will be presented. Mr. Shea has always had success in obtaining plays with startling and sensational endings. His plays tend to increase interest as the play progresses, and always end in a whirlwind of enthusiasm.

Empire—"Saved From the Sea."

"Saved From the Sea" will be seen at the Empire Theater this week. The story is that of a fisherman who is unjustly accused of having murdered his companions by blowing up a fishing smack, a scene which takes place in full view of the audience. The man is sentenced to death and mounts the scaffold, but the mechanism refuses to work and he is saved through the delay caused by defective bolts. His sentence is commuted to life imprisonment in the quarries of Portland. The innocence of the hero is proved in the course of time and all ends happily. The cast includes Laura Hulbert, who plays the heroine.

Lyceum—"The Utopians."

The Utopians will come to the Lyceum Theater for one week commencing tomorrow. The first part is a skit entitled "Cabaret Du Lion Rouge." An innovation in this class of entertainment will be the introduction of a one-act play entitled "A Vagabond Hero."

Week of Grand Opera.

Close on the heels of last Sunday's article on the opera, the opera company in Washington—Manager La Tour, of the Columbia, and Henry W. Savage have arranged for a week of grand opera at the Columbia, beginning Monday, February 1. As was then suggested, in view of present musical tendencies, the opera chosen in addition to those performed in Baltimore, is "Faust," and not "The Flying Dutchman." The other works selected are "The Bohemian Girl," "Il Trovatore," "Carmen," "Othello," and "Lohengrin."

An Autograph Score.

The autographed copy of "The Tenderfoot" score, adorned with the signatures of author, composer, director, and all the members of the original cast, has recently been added to the library of Isadore Witmark, music publisher. It is his custom to have such a souvenir of every production in which his house is interested.

There was a great deal of discussion when the score was received from "The Tenderfoot" company. Mr. Witmark knew every name inscribed thereon, until, down at the bottom, he was astonished to see a large elliptical mark of puzzling contour, over which was written "Rupert—His Mark." Speculation was rife as to who in "The Tenderfoot" company was so illiterate as not to be able to write.

A letter from Carle solved the puzzle. Rupert is the docile and intelligent little donkey, upon whose back the comedian makes his first entrance in the play. Rupert's hoof was inked and his signature duly stamped on the list of original actors in "The Tenderfoot" cast. Carle explained that no one deserved more than Rupert to have his name perpetuated in this connection, as the donkey's self-possession and reposeful manner is one of the hits of the piece.

Miss Robson in London.

"Merely Mary Ann" to Play There Next Autumn.

George Tyler, general manager of the Liebler Company, went to London three weeks ago, and after a brief visit with Isaac Zangwill, returned on the same steamer he had taken out of New York. He came at once to Washington, and here disclosed the object of his rapid trip.

"I went abroad chiefly to complete arrangements for Miss Eleanor Robson's appearance in Israel Zangwill's 'Merely Mary Ann' at one of Charles Frohmans' theaters in London next autumn," said Mr. Tyler Tuesday morning. "All the necessary preliminary preparations for her engagement have now been made."

"I saw Mr. Zangwill, of course, and he is naturally much gratified at the success his play has made in this country. Just now he is finishing his dramatization of 'The Serio-Comic Gnomes,' which Daniel Frohman ordered for Cecilia Loftus. He and his bride are at Avignon, in France. From there they intend to go to Spain and later on they are going to Jerusalem, where Mr. Zangwill is thinking of taking up a permanent residence. He is much interested, you know, in the Zionist movement for the return of the Hebrews to Palestine. 'I know that Mr. Zangwill and his bride are a very loving couple, and that his pet name for her is 'Dear,' because